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Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to be here with so many of my former ministerial colleagues just 2 weeks after my appointment as European Commissioner for External Relations. In this new capacity, I look forward to further strengthening the **EU's co-operation with the OSCE**. In a way, this means that I have the chance to continue in my new role what I started when I had the honour of chairing the OSCE in 2000.

Dear colleagues,

We are witnessing an extraordinary **period of change** in Europe. The OSCE is successfully adapting to these new challenges, but further substantial reform is necessary to make it even more effective, efficient and valuable. At the same time, the principles and values embodied in the Helsinki Final Act and developed throughout 30 years have not lost any of their importance.

The recent **events in Ukraine** prove that these principles remain extremely relevant. I welcome the independent decision of the Supreme Court in Kiev on 3 December, which opened the way for a repeat of the second round of the election that can fully reflect the will of the Ukrainian people. All parties have to work constructively for a just and transparent outcome of the vote scheduled for December 26. It will be important to find a way forward that will soon bring the current political uncertainty to an end. This should

not be a tug of war between East and West. We should rather all be pulling together in one direction: helping the country to find a swift way out of the crisis, while ensuring that democratic principles prevail, and helping to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity, unity and sovereignty.

I would like to **commend the OSCE** and in particular ODIHR for the very useful work they have been doing so far in Ukraine, both on the election observation and the contribution to international mediation efforts. It is absolutely essential that the recommendations of ODIHR are fully taken on board in order to prevent irregularities recurring. The European Commission is now examining to what extent we might support this process through our rapid reaction mechanism or other means.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The fundamental goal that we are pursuing through the OSCE remains the same: To contribute to a comprehensive security agenda in Europe. In today's world, enhancing security will only be possible if our approach has "**human security**" at its core. We all need to safeguard and develop the fundamental political, social and economic rights of individuals. With its three dimensions, the politico-military, the economic-environmental and the human dimension, the OSCE is well equipped to fulfill this goal.

In the same vein, the **European Union** disposes of a wide range of instruments which are particularly suited to responding to these multiple challenges and I am committed to strengthening EU-OSCE complementarity. The European Commission will continue to work with and through the OSCE to strengthen security from innovative angles and to seek synergies, for instance regarding energy security, border management, good governance and institution-building. We will particularly also seek such synergies with our European Neighborhood Policy. Under this Policy, Action Plans will be tailor-made according to the needs and possibilities of each country. It is up to the countries to determine the progress, which will give them a stake in the internal market and other EU policies.

Mr. Chairman!

It is also clear that we cannot have common security without solutions to **existing conflicts** in Europe. My vision for the OSCE is that of an Organization with the determination and resolve to focus with renewed energy on addressing those conflicts that otherwise remain “frozen” - by all possible means and initiatives.

There is a clear need for a very proactive OSCE that draws its strength more from its founding principles. The aspects of conflict prevention and conflict solution are fundamental in this regard. From the time when I was Chairperson in office, I always felt that the 3 main strands, the politico-military, the economic and the human dimension should be mutually reinforcing. While there is merit in looking into ways of strengthening the OSCE’s politico-military and economic dimensions, I cannot see any scope for reduction in the fields of human rights, fundamental values and democratic principles.

Mr. Chairman, in thanking you for all your efforts during the year, I trust that we will continue to focus on promoting comprehensive security and on exploring all opportunities towards solving persisting conflicts on the Organization’s territory.

I am sure that Slovenia will continue to pursue these goals vigorously. Please rest assured that also in my new position I shall spare no effort to help.